

# Radlett Preparatory School

Kendal Hall, Watling Street, Radlett, Hertfordshire, WD7 7LY

## Inspection dates

27–29 September 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school's leaders have set high expectations for teachers and pupils. Systems for holding staff to account are more robust than previously. This is an improving school.
- Teaching is effective because it enables pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to plan lessons which meet the needs of most pupils well. However, the current system for recording assessment does not encourage teachers to provide for the highest levels of learning so that outcomes are even better, particularly in mathematics.
- A small amount of marking does not follow the school's assessment policy and so is not as helpful in raising standards as the school intends.
- The most able pupils, although achieving well, are not stretched to achieve more highly because not all teaching challenges them sufficiently.
- The choice of school subjects is broad and balanced and stimulates pupils' interest. Pupils also enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer during lunchtime and after school.
- Fundamental British values are at the heart of what the school stands for. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school. They attend school regularly, and bullying is a rare occurrence. They behave exceptionally well.
- Pupils feel safe and leaders and the proprietors ensure that arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are effective.
- The proprietors monitor the school's effectiveness well and have a good understanding of how the school can continue to improve. They have ensured the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The early years provision is good. Teachers monitor children's progress well and maintain positive relationships with parents.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes further, by:
  - making sure that teaching provides an appropriate degree of stretch and challenge for all pupils, but particularly for those who are the most able
  - refining the school's systems for assessing pupils' progress so that teachers identify and provide for pupils' outstanding progress and deepen pupils' understanding of what they are taught, especially in mathematics
  - ensuring that the school's marking policy is consistently applied, especially in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal has improved the culture of accountability within the school and has provided opportunities for an increased number of staff to take on leadership responsibilities. A published schedule to monitor, evaluate and review the school's work ensures that the school remains self-critical and evaluative. One parent commented 'the staff team are very united and everyone is clearly working towards the same goals'.
- The school's self-evaluation summary document realistically evaluates the school's current performance. Leaders and governors have accurately identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. The weaker aspects have been prioritised in the most recent school improvement plan as key priorities.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the most recent independent school standards. They check regularly to ensure that the school is fully compliant with these. All relevant documentation is readily available and up to date.
- Parents expressed positive views about the school's leadership in their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire and the school's own surveys. It is also clear from the responses to the staff questionnaire that members of staff are highly satisfied with the school and have confidence in its leadership. Staff morale is high.
- The school has a 'family feel' where pupils and children are known as individuals. Leaders have created a happy learning environment. Staff enjoy coming to work at the school and pupils enjoy their learning.
- Teaching is managed effectively. Leaders at all levels monitor the quality of teaching well through a range of activities to gather evidence of the quality of teaching over time. These include formal and informal lesson observations; an ongoing analysis of pupils' outcomes; and scheduled reviews of pupils' books. The monitoring of teaching, although generally thorough, has not yet ensured that assessment, including marking, is providing the highest level of learning for all pupils and especially for the most able.
- Teachers have access to a wide range of resources and good-quality in-house training as well as being able to attend relevant training offered by external providers. This ensures that they remain up to date with the latest developments in their subject areas. Their performance is managed well, and leaders make effective use of the strongest practitioners to work with those who aspire to become outstanding.
- The school's comprehensive curriculum ensures a wide coverage of subjects. This is supplemented by a range of exciting lunchtime and after-school clubs. These include judo, fencing, drama, Zumba and Mandarin Chinese. Pupils told inspectors they would like even more clubs, particularly a baking club and a debating society. Leaders review the curriculum provision and make changes accordingly. For example, they have decided to switch from teaching two modern foreign languages to just one because they believe this will provide pupils with a better grounding in language skills for the next phase of their schooling, in Year 7.
- Fundamental British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted well. The school is successful in its aim to create well-rounded individuals who appreciate their good-quality education. They have a good understanding of each other's faiths and beliefs and they know right from wrong. Pupils understand that modern British society is comprised of people who might be different to them whether this relates

to religion, disability or sexuality. The school presents pupils with real-life experiences to appreciate fairness and democracy. For example, as well as being represented by a school council, pupils held a mock general election in May 2015 as well as mock referendum in June 2016. Pupils who met with inspectors were able to eloquently present their arguments for and against 'Brexit'.

## **Governance**

- The two proprietors and the principal are responsible for the governance of the school. They carry out their role effectively. The fact that one of the proprietors is also one of the vice-principals does not pose any conflict of interest, as she regards her governance role as quite separate from that of being vice-principal. This is also clearly evidenced from inspectors' scrutiny of minutes from proprietors' meetings.
- The proprietors hold the principal to account for the school's effectiveness through pertinent questioning based on matters which arise from his termly detailed termly report. They also conduct visits to the school with a specific focus, for example, the quality of the learning environment.
- Policies are reviewed regularly and are fully up to date. The school has a safeguarding policy published on its website. This policy takes current government requirements relating to the safeguarding of children into account.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's single central record of recruitment checks of staff is compliant with current requirements. All staff have received up-to-date safeguarding training, and all have received and read the latest guidance for keeping children safe.
- Staff fully understand their role in keeping children safe. Systems and procedures for referring any concerns are clear. All staff have received 'Prevent' duty training to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorism or extreme views. Record-keeping relating to individual pupils is detailed and robust.
- New staff receive a comprehensive induction which includes all relevant safeguarding documentation and the whistle-blowing policy.
- The school operates within a culture of vigilance. In their discussions with inspectors, it was clear that staff are suitably trained to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. Staff maintain positive relationships with parents to ensure the well-being of all pupils.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching over time is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is often supplemented through the use of specialist teachers. Pupils are interested in their learning, behave exceptionally well in lessons and make good progress. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are strong.
- Teachers are adept at developing key skills across a range of subjects. Pupils are able to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects well. The good development of their literacy skills in particular makes them articulate, and means they are able to use a broad range of vocabulary.
- Reading skills are taught well. Pupils enjoy reading, and told inspectors they also enjoy reading aloud in lessons. Pupils who read to inspectors, chose suitably challenging books

and read with great expression and confidence.

- Teachers check for pupils' understanding of what they are learning using a range of strategies including good use of questioning, pupils sharing their answers with a talking partner and self- and peer-assessment. These strategies enable pupils to test out what they have learned and to deepen their understanding and knowledge.
- Teachers typically plan learning to match the needs of most pupils' differing abilities. Teachers deploy a range of strategies. Sometimes they direct pupils to start tasks with varying degrees of difficulty. At other times, they allow pupils to choose the tasks they start with themselves. Pupils told inspectors they would not choose the easiest option because 'that just wouldn't be right'.
- Additional adults in the classroom work well with targeted pupils to help them understand for themselves what they are learning about.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because the most able pupils do not consistently achieve the standards of which they are fully capable. Although they achieve high standards, they are not always presented with tasks which stretch and challenge them fully. The most able pupils continue working on similar content rather than being presented with materials which develop their mastery of the subject. Inspectors were not fully convinced that teachers know what outstanding learning and progress looks like.
- Because assessment, particularly in mathematics, focuses on content rather than developing reasoning and in-depth enquiry, teaching sometimes fails to stretch pupils to the full. Assessment in English is of a high quality but in mathematics some marking does not reflect an accurate assessment of pupils' understanding, as required of the policy: comments are mostly praise with little explanation as to how to improve.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe when in school. The school site is secure and systems for signing in visitors to the school are robust.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the risks associated with using the internet. Their safety is supported by the school's insistence that mobile telephones are not brought into school.
- Pupils are encouraged to be kind to one another, but know what to do if they witness anyone being unkind to others or to themselves.
- An assembly on the Magna Carta emphasised the importance of fairness, linking this topic to the historic document. Impressively, some pupils, having had sight of this document, explained its origins and its role in changing the shape of British history. The leader of the assembly brought the message of the Magna Carta to the pupils' level, encouraging them to be kind to each other during lessons and breaktimes. In the same assembly, pupils performed four hymns to celebrate harvest festival and voted for their favourite one, which would be performed at a later date.
- Pupils are given a range of responsibilities. Democracy and equalities are promoted through the election of a male and female captain and vice-captain for each of the school's four houses as well as sports captains. The school council is also regarded by the pupils as an effective way of getting their views heard.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are excellent ambassadors for the school and their behaviour is exemplary. They have impeccable manners and show great respect towards each other and members of school staff.
- Fixed-term exclusions are a very rare occurrence, as a last resort, and effective in improving behaviour.
- Pupils move around the small school building sensibly but with purpose. They socialise with each other well during breaktimes, particularly when outside. School uniform is worn with pride. Pupils come well equipped to lessons and ready to learn. Their pride is also reflected through the neat presentation of their work.
- In lessons, pupils are confident, self-assured learners. When they make a mistake, they show great resilience and are determined to get it right next time. The 'golden rules' system was amended by the school council to make the rules more positive. These rules underpin the behaviour policy and are effective in promoting positive attitudes. Disruptive behaviour in lessons is a very rare occurrence.
- Incidents of bullying are minimal. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and are confident that any incidents that are reported will be treated seriously and dealt with quickly.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above the national average. No pupils are persistently absent from school. Pupils' punctuality to school is good.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress across a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they make better progress than pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Notable progress is made in English, humanities, art and music. The school's challenging curriculum is a key contributory factor in helping pupils achieve these good outcomes. The curriculum has at its core the new national age-related expectations and these have been supplemented with additional expectations, which place extra demands on pupils.
- Because of the higher demands placed on pupils, those with lower starting points catch up and make good progress. This is also due to the effective teaching, which targets these pupils particularly well.
- The most able pupils make good progress but their progress is not yet outstanding because teaching does not offer enough opportunities to deepen their understanding or to develop higher-level skills in reasoning. School leaders have identified this as a barrier to outstanding progress through their self-evaluation summary, and have included questioning skills as an area to focus on this year. However, because the current emphasis in curriculum plans is on subject content, teachers sometimes fail to increase the intellectual demands on pupils. The school's systems for recording progress as being effective simply because the most able pupils have more boxes ticked to indicate they have covered more content are not helpful.
- Pupils make good progress in English, reading fluently and with great expression. Some of the creative writing is impressive. High-quality assessment in English that gives pupils the stimulation to try harder results in some excellent pieces of writing. However, in

mathematics, pupils' reasoning skills are not pushed to a high enough level, particularly for the most able.

- The few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because systems for identifying their needs are well established, and they receive targeted support based on their needs. The school works well with parents to support their children's learning at home.
- Pupils move on successfully to a range of senior independent or selective maintained schools.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years provision is good. Around two thirds of the children start with skills which are above those expected for their age. Children make good progress from their different starting points.
- Phonics is taught well and has resulted in significant improvements over the last three years. Almost all children reach or surpass the national expectations by the end of Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is strong. Teachers and teaching assistants adopt a consistent approach towards teaching children and have common expectations across the three classes. Children respond well to teachers' expectations, make good progress and behave well. Relationships between adults and children are excellent. Children are enthusiastic and keen to learn.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan activities which promote children's literacy and mathematical development well. Assessments of children's progress are accurate. Children's work is celebrated, particularly in writing. Every child's writing is displayed in the classroom. These displays demonstrate a wide range of skills around letter formation, from children who are confident at forming their letters to those whose pencil control is weak.
- Leadership of the early years is effective. Secure systems are in place to monitor, evaluate and review the early years provision. Teaching is also managed well. For example, pairing those with less experience with more-experienced colleagues to strengthen teaching skills.
- As the school has an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage, it has created its own curriculum, which is broad and balanced. The effective curriculum focuses on developing children's reading, writing and mathematical skills, preparing them well for entry to Year 1.
- Due to the relatively small size of the outdoor space and the fact that there are three early years classes, children are restricted as to how often they can access this area. However, when they do use this space, they take part in meaningful activities. The impact on their development is recorded in detail by the teachers and the teaching assistants.
- Safeguarding arrangements for children in the early years are effective. Children are kept safe and risk assessments are detailed and thorough. Teachers liaise very well with parents, which has a positive impact on promoting children's well-being.

## School details

Unique reference number	117615
DfE registration number	919/6034
Inspection number	10012935

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Preparatory day school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	443
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Mr & Mrs Warren
Chair	Wayne Warren
Principal	Gary White
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,180
Telephone number	01923 856812
Website	<a href="http://www.radlettprep.co.uk">www.radlettprep.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@radlettprep.co.uk">admin@radlettprep.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	20 June 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is situated in a Georgian Grade II listed building in private grounds in the village of Radlett. It was established in the 1930s. Pupils come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.
- The school has a below-average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities compared to national figures.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The principal took up post in September 2013 and offers school improvement support to five other schools in the local area.



- The school has an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning in every class, sometimes accompanied by one of the vice-principals. They also looked at a range of pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject and phase leaders, the proprietors and two groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised school improvement documents; policies; information on pupils' progress; records of the quality of teaching; and information on pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 39 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also took account of parents' responses to the school's own surveys.

## Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Caroline Dawes	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Crow	Ofsted Inspector

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